CONGRATULATIONS, CLASS OF 2021!

MIT's Oldest and Largest Newspaper

thetech.com

The Tech

Established 1881

Volume 141, Number 14

Friday, June 4, 2021

WEATHER, p. 2

FRI: 77°F | 63°F
Heavy Rain.

SAT: 85°F | 70°F
Mostly Sunny.

SUN: 90°F | 70°F
Sunny.

KRISTINA CHEN—THE TECH

Graduating students and families commemorate with photos in a largely vacant Killian Court prior to the Class of 2021's virtual Commencement.

All faculty and staff must be vaccinated

MIT anticipates relaxing COVID-19 restrictions following state policies

By Kristina Chen
EDITOR IN CHIEF

All faculty and staff are required to be vaccinated against COVID-19 by July 30 in order to work on campus, according to an update emailed to MIT community members by Vice President for Human Resources Ramona Allen, Chancellor Cynthia Barnhart PhD '88, Provost Martin Schmidt PhD '88, Executive Vice President and Treasurer Glen Shor, MIT Medical Director Cecilia Stuopis '90, Vice Chancellor Ian Waitz, and Vice President for Research Maria Zuber.

Additionally, certain contractors and others working on campus or accessing MIT facilities must also be vaccinated. For staff represented by a union, MIT's labor relations team will discuss with union leadership about the requirement.

Exemptions may be granted for medical or religious reasons or for staff who are approved to work remotely full-time.

The email writes that the decision to require the vaccine was based on "understanding of the science behind the vaccines, their established safety and efficacy, and their wide availability across the state and country."

Additionally, MIT "feels that it is necessary to have this information" to "monitor the level of vaccination in our community and to take measures to mitigate or respond to any outbreaks."

Beginning June 1, COVID-19 vaccination is required for community members seeking to participate in MIT-sponsored travel, unless the traveler has an approved exemption.

MIT will accept all vaccines that have received Emergency Use Authorization or final approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Adminis-

Vaccine, Page 2

IN SHORT

Happy Pride Month!

Commencement for the Class of 2021 will take place online June 4.

The **first day of classes for the summer** session is June 7.

The **pre-registration deadline** and the deadline for continuing students to select CI-H/CI-HW subjects for the fall is June 17.

MIT will observe **Juneteenth** as an Institute holiday June 18.

The deadline for **undergraduate meal plan selection** is July 5.

Faculty, students, and staff should report their **vaccine status** at *covid-vaccine.mit.edu.*

Interested in **joining *The Tech*?** Email *join@tech.mit.edu.*

Send news and tips to *news@tech.mit.edu.*

Geathers and Chen re-elected as UA president and vice president in 2021 election

Undergraduate Association (UA) Election Commissioner Sarah Pertsemlidis '23 announced the results of the UA presidential election and the Class Council elections in a May 1 email to undergraduates.

The UA presidential election and elections for all positions (president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, social chair, and publicity chair) in the four Class Councils were uncontested.

Incumbent UA President Danielle Geathers '22 and UA Vice President Yu Jing Chen '22 were re-elected. Their ticket was ranked first by 581 voters, with the alternative being write-in candidates.

627 undergraduates participated in the election, for a turnout of approximately 14.4%, compared to 38.5% from last year's contested election, 14.4% in the 2019 election (which was uncontested), 18.3% in the 2018 election (which was also uncontested), and 43.8% in the 2017 election (which was contested).

Of the voters in the election, 9.7% were seniors, 34.8% were juniors, 29.2% were sophomores, and 26.3% were first years.

— Kristina Chen

First Generation/Low Income Working Group submits report

Working group recommends dedicating space and office with full-time staff to increase support for FGLI students

By Kristina Chen
EDITOR IN CHIEF

The First Generation/Low Income Working Group (FGLIWG) submitted its final report to the Office of the Vice Chancellor (OVC).

The working group includes staff from the Division of Student Life (DSL), Office of Minority Education (OME), Office of the First Year (OFY), MIT Admissions, Career Advising and Professional Development, Student Support Services, Student Financial Services (SFS), residential communities, and academic departments, as well as undergraduate students.

The group was charged in 2019 with determining what support was being offered at that time to first generation and/or low income (FGLI) students at MIT and where gaps existed, with reviewing available data to better understand experiences of FGLI students, identifying national best practices to support FGLI students, and determining what existing resources could be improved or additional resources could be added to better support FGLI students.

The group would then report to its sponsors in the OME, DSL, and OFY and to Vice Chancellor Ian Waitz, Vice President and Dean for Student Life Suzy Nelson, Chancellor Cynthia Barnhart PhD '88, and Provost Martin Schmidt PhD '88.

The group developed four main recommendations for MIT to better support its FGLI student population.

The first is to institutionalize a definition of being FGLI to help students understand their identity and use available resources.

The second is to dedicate a space and office with increased full-time staff support for FGLI students.

The third is to offer a first year seminar, taught by a FGLI faculty member, to teach about and help students transition to MIT.

The fourth is to hold training for faculty and teaching staff on using inclusive language inside and outside of the classroom to create an equitable environment.

The FGLIWG met 16 times during the 2019–20 academic year from September 2019 to May 2020. The group saw presentations from groups that support FGLI students such as the QuestBridge Scholars Network, the First Generation Program, Class Awareness Support and Equality, and the Accessing Resources at MIT (ARM) coalition and completed readings of previous research on support for FGLI students.

The group divided into four subgroups beginning in January 2020: benchmarking; focus groups; data collection; and resources, services, and academic experiences.

The benchmarking subgroup assessed support provided by peer institutions to their FGLI students, particularly through the Consortium on Financing Higher Education.

The subgroup found that all of MIT's peer institutions have at least three full time staff members dedicated to FGLI student support and initiatives, whereas MIT "only

FGLI, Page 2

CLIMATE CONSCIOUS PLEDGES

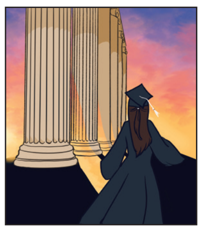
MIT Divest calls on students to take action. **OPINION, p. 4**

IN SOLIDARITY

A letter to Palestine from Indigenous Black America. **OPINION, p. 5**

PALESTINIAN ACADEMICS

Hope and humanity amidst destruction and terror. **OPINION, p. 5**



ME VS. ME

Saying goodbye is always a complicated matter. **CAMPUS LIFE, p. 12**

PNR

Switch. **FUN, p. 6**

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WEATHER

Seniors end their time at MIT with a bang — literally!

By Phoebe Lin
STAFF METEOROLOGIST

As seniors prepare to commemorate their time at MIT, the virtual format of this year's commencement appears to be a plus for one small reason: thunderstorms. Watch out if you're planning on celebrating outside tomorrow! Especially from 3 p.m.–4 p.m., make sure to stay under low-hanging trees and to avoid lightning. If you hear the rumbling of thunder shortly after flashes of lightning, head inside to safety.

To all our graduating seniors, we have been thunderstruck by your warmth and the wisdom you've shared with us for these past years, and we can't wait to see how else you'll light up the world. Come back and visit — we're wishing you clear skies ahead!

Extended Forecast

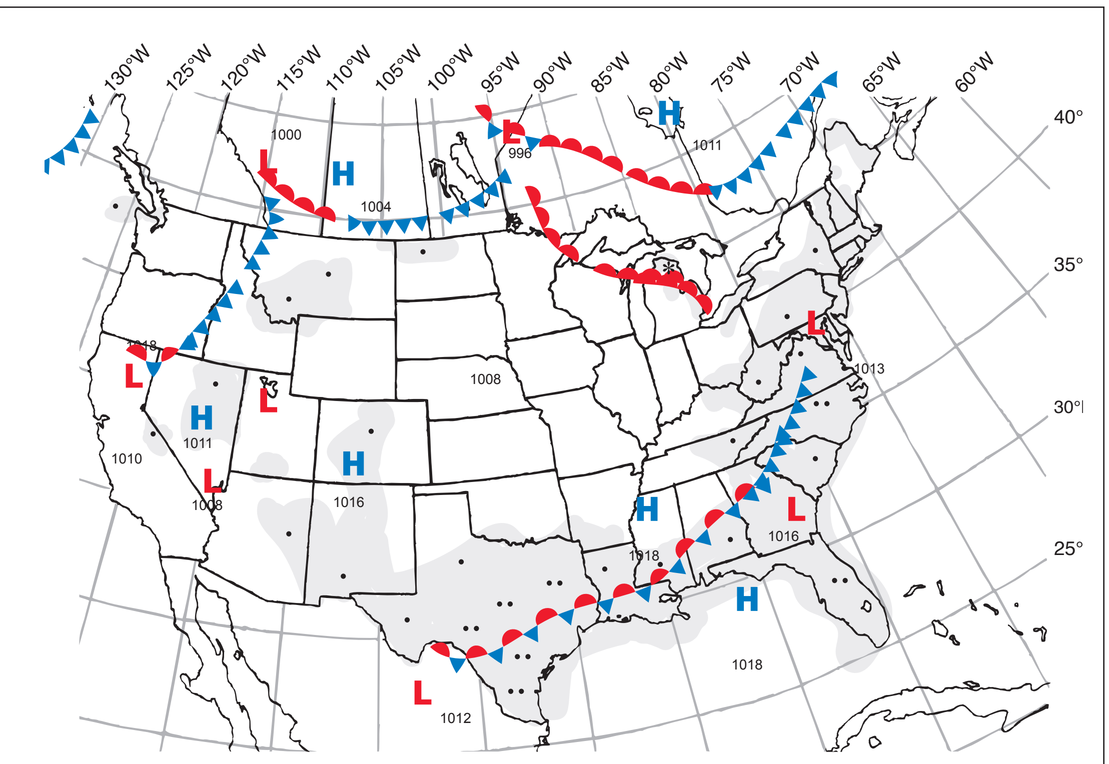
Today: Heavy rain and chance of thunderstorms, peaking around 3 p.m.–4 p.m. High around 77°F (25°C). Southwest winds 11 to 13 mph.

Tonight: Heavy rain with patchy fog, then cloudy. Rainfall totals less than a tenth of an inch, except possible higher amounts from thunderstorms. Low around 63°F (17°C), winds southwest 7-11 mph.

Tomorrow: Mostly sunny, later partly cloudy. high around 85°F (29°C) and low around 70°F (21°C). Winds southwest, 7-14 mph.

Sunday: Sunny, with a high around 90°F (32°C) and a low around 70°F (21°C). West winds 10-13 mph.

Monday: Sunny, with a high near 95°F (35°C) and a low around 72°F (22°C). Southwest winds 8-11 mph.



Situation for Noon Eastern Time, Friday, June 4, 2021

Compiled by MIT Meteorology Staff and *The Tech*

Working group recommends research on career advising to support FGLI students

FGLI, from Page 1

has 1/3 of one (1) employee's role dedicated to this work." Additionally, a majority of peers have a dedicated physical space for FGLI students and staff, which MIT does not have.

The focus groups subgroup facilitated six focus groups: two with students who identified as low income, two with students who identified as first generation, and two with students who identified as both.

Sessions with the focus groups found academic preparedness, career selection support, community resources for parents and families, community building opportunities, and identifying guidance and support as themes.

Students reported feeling inadequately prepared for academic rigor compared to peers who had access to more advanced classes. They also expressed that their families could not help them prepare for the transition to MIT or provide academic advice, having not experienced college before.

Students also expressed that they felt lost or unsure where to begin when thinking about life or careers post-MIT, with some feeling pressured to declare majors with the highest salaries upon graduation rather than explore or feeling that the "real world" would be an additional obstacle beyond college.

They also described facing difficulties navigating support and finding a community of peers with similar challenges in a higher education environment due to the limitations of resources for FGLI students existing at the Institute.

Students also expressed that having a dedicated space for FGLI support would be very helpful and allow them to seek help efficiently as well as have a place to go to for assistance and community support.

The data collection subgroup gathered feedback and reviewed survey information from MIT Institutional Research (IR), MIT Admissions, and SFS.

The subgroup found from Admissions and SFS that of the approximately 4,500 undergraduates enrolled during academic year 2019–20, 25% were low income, 18% were first generation, and 12% were both first generation and low income.

Additionally, IR found from survey results that the financial situation of FGLI students impacts their experience by reducing their opportunities for extracurricular activities such as being able to participate in study abroad, community service, and unpaid research or internship opportunities.

IR also wrote that FGLI students "report less strong community ties, both within and outside of MIT," with fewer having conversations with faculty members and having fewer faculty of whom they could ask for a letter of recommendation. They also report "thinking that others at MIT don't think they belong at higher rates" than their peers, and fewer report having a support network outside of MIT or seeking career advice from alumni or parents.

The resources, services, and academic experiences distributed surveys to undergraduate academic administrators evaluating the services and support they provide to FGLI students within departments and connected with MIT support offices to assess existing support systems and resources.

The subgroup found that beyond the first year, MIT does not have a system in place allowing students to self-identify as FGLI, that most advisors only receive information on their advisees via WebSIS and their first-year folder (including information on ASE scores and transfer credit), that departmental advisors are not trained on how to build relationships with their advisees, that departments do not provide training that is specific to supporting FGLI students, and that not many offices have specific programming for supporting FGLI students.

The subgroup did find that certain offices, including the OVC, OFY, and OME, have programming for FGLI students including workshops and training and that the ARM coalition is an additional resource that helps to alleviate some financial hardships for low income students.

The FGLIWG also described steps for continuing research on supporting FGLI students, such as including FGLI student voices in grading and academic policy decisions, providing support for families of FGLI students, addressing support for FGLI graduate students, providing targeted career advising for FGLI students, continuing the work of the Food Insecurity Solutions Working Group with respect to FGLI students, and adding questions to Institute surveys specifically aimed at FGLI students to track support for them.

The group recommends revisiting the report in two years to assess progress on its recommendations and identify areas requiring additional attention.

The group also provided COVID-19 specific recommendations, as FGLI are disproportionately affected by challenges associated with the pandemic due to a lack of resources at home/off campus.

The group compiled a document of technological resources that MIT could provide to support students at home such as a WiFi hotspot or tablet, though the group found that students who rely on internet access or other technology from MIT "experience frustrations as a result of their geographical location and access to basic amenities."

The group found that for many FGLI students, living off campus or at home is significantly more stressful and less conducive to learning than time at MIT and implemented recommendations including intentionally matching students with student success coaches who have worked with FGLI students, building upon digital support group platforms, and creating digestible online resources for navigating MIT resources at home.

Town hall scheduled on June 9 to discuss working back on campus for faculty and staff

Vaccine, from Page 1

tration or that are listed as emergency use from the World Health Organization.

MIT previously announced that all students would be required to receive the vaccine before enrolling in the fall.

According to the email, 21% of MIT community members expected to be on campus in the fall have yet to report their vaccine status, and 91% of members currently accessing campus have reported that they are either partially or fully vaccinated.

Proof of vaccination should be submitted in the Atlas mobile app or at *covidvaccine.mit.edu*.

The email also included a preview of MIT's fall policies, writing that as more community members receive the vaccine, MIT "will be in a position to relax many" of its restrictions.

The email wrote that to "gain an early understanding" of community health, MIT will initially require any community member accessing campus buildings to be tested for COVID-19 once a week and that MIT Medical will develop and unobserved, self-administered testing system for the fall to more quickly and easily integrate the testing process.

MIT will "regularly evaluate" whether widespread community testing will be necessary throughout the fall, either stopping or ramping up testing if data indicate that testing is no longer needed or if an uptick in virus prevalence occurs, respectively.

Additionally, individuals on campus who are exempt from the vaccine requirements may be required to comply with additional testing and mask wearing requirements.

MIT plans for faculty and staff to resume in-person work by Sept. 7. The Institute's Work Succeeding initiative is also determining potential more flexible work options.

A town hall for faculty and staff discussing the transition to work on campus, vaccine requirements, campus access and testing, workspace safety, and the Work Succeeding initiative will take place June 9.

Additionally, MIT expects that the campus will re-open to the MIT community, meaning buildings "will be easier to access than they were during the pandemic" for those in compliance with requirements and capacity limits will be lifted in classrooms, offices, and other campus spaces.

MIT also plans to put in place "systems and measures" to safely allow guests and visitors into residence halls, on admissions tours, and at campus events and to make certain areas of campus open to the public. MIT does not yet know whether additional visiting appointments will remain paused for the fall.

Massachusetts and Cambridge lifted their remaining COVID-19 restrictions May 29 and plan to end the State of Emergency June 15. MIT also anticipates relaxing its remaining policies "in the coming weeks," such as by allowing fully-vaccinated individuals to not wear face coverings on campus.

```
def learnMarketableJobSkills():
    return linux, OSX, javascript, applescript, perl, python, PHP

if self.interest == True:
    print "E-mail join@tech.mit.edu"
```

Be a PENguin
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Biz pays the bills

Join the Business Department of *The Tech* and earn $12/hr!

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Solution to See You

from page 6

3	5	6	2	1	4
6	2	3	5	4	1
2	4	5	1	6	3
5	1	2	4	3	6
4	6	1	3	2	5
1	3	4	6	5	2

Solution to Later

from page 6

9	5	8	4	7	3	6	1	2
3	7	6	1	8	2	5	9	4
4	1	2	5	9	6	7	3	8
5	3	7	9	2	8	4	6	1
2	8	1	6	4	7	3	5	9
6	9	4	3	1	5	8	2	7
8	2	5	7	6	1	9	4	3
7	6	9	2	3	4	1	8	5
1	4	3	8	5	9	2	7	6

Solution to Alligator

from page 6

4	1	7	6	8	3	2	9	5
5	2	8	7	9	4	3	1	6
7	4	1	9	2	6	5	3	8
9	6	3	2	4	8	7	5	1
8	5	2	1	3	7	6	4	9
6	3	9	8	1	5	4	2	7
3	9	6	5	7	2	1	8	4
1	7	4	3	5	9	8	6	2
2	8	5	4	6	1	9	7	3

Solution to In a While

from page 7

3	7	9	2	5	8	6	4	1
2	8	6	7	1	4	9	5	3
5	4	1	9	3	6	7	2	8
7	1	8	5	4	2	3	9	6
4	6	5	1	9	3	8	7	2
9	2	3	6	8	7	5	1	4
1	9	2	3	6	5	4	8	7
8	3	7	4	2	9	1	6	5
6	5	4	8	7	1	2	3	9

Solution to Crocodile

from page 7

2	3	6	4	5	1
6	1	4	2	3	5
5	6	3	1	2	4
1	2	5	3	4	6
4	5	2	6	1	3
3	4	1	5	6	2

Solution to At the Bar

from page 7

D	O	O	R	S	■	G	A	S	P	■	S	A	F	E
I	N	D	I	A	■	U	C	L	A	■	P	I	E	R
S	T	O	N	Y	■	A	H	O	Y	■	I	D	E	A
C	O	R	K	S	C	R	E	W	S	■	R	E	D	S
■	■	■	■	N	O	D	■	■	C	P	A	■	■	■
A	C	T	I	O	N	■	S	H	A	L	L	W	E	■
B	R	A	N	■	■	M	O	O	S	E	■	H	R	S
C	O	C	K	T	A	I	L	S	H	A	K	E	R	S
S	C	I	■	A	L	L	O	T	■	■	I	R	O	N
■	S	T	A	T	U	E	S	■	E	L	D	E	R	S
■	■	■	D	A	M	■	■	A	D	O	■	■	■	■
L	O	G	O	■	I	C	E	B	U	C	K	E	T	S
A	S	A	P	■	N	A	V	Y	■	A	N	D	R	E
S	L	I	T	■	U	S	E	S	■	L	O	G	I	C
T	O	N	S	■	M	E	S	S	■	S	W	E	P	T

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(aka, your new 3 a.m.
pset support group)

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OPEN LETTER

MIT Divest releases Climate Conscious Pledges

By Mitali Chowdhury and Manuel Morales

The Climate Conscious Career Pledge calls on MIT affiliates to devote their labor to sustainable institutions. The Climate Conscious Donation Pledge calls on MIT affiliates to not donate to MIT until it divests.

The recently released MIT Climate Action Plan (CAP) includes updates to the previous plan released five years ago. MIT Divest hopes the plan will spur MIT to reduce its carbon footprint, increase its investment in climate action, and focus its attention on a just transition to a sustainable future. However, Divest remains severely disappointed by MIT’s refusal to fully and publicly divest from the fossil fuel industry. We believe that under the goals outlined in the CAP, MIT cannot be considered a climate action leader as we transition to a sustainable and equitable future. In response to the CAP, we have released a Climate Conscious Career Pledge and Donation Pledge for MIT affiliates to send a powerful message to fossil fuel companies and others, including MIT, who remain complicit in their destructive and deceitful actions that we are committed to working towards a just, carbon-free future.

Despite the plan’s commitment to “go as far as we can, as fast as we can, with the tools and methods we have now,” with regards to their investment portfolio, MIT only plans to “undertake an intensive analysis of how to achieve net-zero carbon by 2050.” This timeline is a step in the right direction, but it suffers from a lack of clarity and urgency compared to those of peer institutions like Brown, the University of Cambridge, and the University of California system, who have all agreed to fully divest from fossil fuels. To reaffirm the need for divestment and disengagement from the fossil fuel industry, MIT Divest has created a Climate Conscious Career Pledge, through which we are calling on MIT affiliates to pledge to divest, or withhold, their labor from the fossil fuel industry. By collectively choosing to devote our careers and labor only to institutions actively working towards a sustainable future, students are taking initiative with climate leadership that addresses the shortcomings of MIT’s investments strategy as outlined in the CAP.

Although only four percent of MIT undergraduates take jobs after graduation in the energy and utilities sector (disappointingly, top employers include ExxonMobil, Schlumberger, and Shell Oil), this pledge transcends sectors and is a call for all of us to take a principled stance. MIT students enter a variety of industry sectors after graduating, including finance, tech, healthcare, and consulting. Across each of these, opportunity abounds to engage in sustainable work. By pledging today to devote our labor to sustainable institutions, together we can use our leverage as talented scientists, engineers, designers, artists, scholars, and more to redefine the relationships that MIT as an institution has with these industries.

We acknowledge that not all MIT students will be able to pledge their labor towards sustainable institutions. In particular, we are understanding of those who are forced by economic challenges to take on roles they otherwise would not. However, we also recognize that the privilege that comes with an MIT education opens many doors for each of us to pursue climate-conscious careers. Furthermore, we have a great responsibility to devote the knowledge and skills we have obtained in our time at MIT towards a sustainable and ethical future. As such, we ask every MIT student to consider the wealth of sustainable employment opportunities and to take the empowering step of pledging to devote their labor to the institutions hosting these opportunities.

As MIT students, we receive a rigorous technical education that prepares us to solve the eminent technical challenges of our day. However, the challenge of the climate crisis in particular requires us to look beyond the purely technical and consider the long-term implications of our actions. In the past year, the inclusion of sustainability conversations at the 2020 MIT Fall Career Fair demonstrated student ownership over pursuing climate-conscious careers. Extensive student-led efforts across campus like the Climate Action Plan Working Group Reports further demonstrate students’ dedication to improving sustainability at MIT. In fact, these reports and their respective student presentations to the Climate Action Advisory Committee were instrumental in driving the creation of a new structure of organization for climate activities at MIT, several new educational and research opportunities for students, and a focus on policy and community outreach in the recently released CAP.

Despite taking these important steps, MIT has once again refused to include divestment or any other explicit action against fossil fuel companies in the CAP. By releasing the Climate Conscious Career Pledge, we are reaffirming our student body’s stance that meaningful climate action necessitates direct action against the fossil fuel industry, the companies most responsible for climate change and the perpetuation of climate disinformation. As a further sign of commitment against engagement with fossil fuels, we’ve released the Climate Conscious Donation Pledge, announcing that we will not donate to MIT until it divests its endowment from fossil fuels. Our collective action can deprive fossil fuel companies of MIT’s bright minds and send a message that we will not stand for their continuing damage and deceit.

What makes the MIT community so special is each individual’s experiences and skills. What we students do, here and after we graduate, is a reflection of our unique interests, values, and passions. Whether we conduct research on the ethics and biases in artificial intelligence, engage in community forums for diversity and inclusion, or organize events to advocate for social justice on campus and beyond, we, as MIT students, must consistently stand up for our beliefs and lead the way forward. Our collective student body brings strong ethical values to bear at MIT and beyond, and when the Institute acts against these values, we unite to express our will.

To become a part of a better tomorrow, we must devote our labor to those institutions actively working for a sustainable future today. Sign the Climate Conscious Career Pledge.

Mitali Chowdhury ’24 is a member of MIT Divest.

Manuel Morales ’22 is a member of MIT Divest.

Leave *marks*,
not sharks!
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GUEST COLUMN

Palestinian academics share the tragic reality of life under occupation

Students, scientists, and doctors demonstrate resilience in the face of violence

By Amro Alshareef

The following are a compilation of testimonials by Palestinian academics living in historic Palestine today. These testimonials were compiled by Scientists for Palestine, an international organization created by and for scientists to promote science and support the integration of the occupied Palestinian territories in the international scientific community.

“I could smell tear gas while writing this message,” writes Majd AbuAlrub, an intern doctor at the Jenin Governmental Hospital in the West Bank. “Each weekend, the Israeli forces regularly hit the village with tear gases and sound bombs. I wake up almost every week at 2 a.m. to the sounds of the Israeli troops.” With the recent escalation of violence in the West Bank, AbuAlrub has faced heightened challenges. “Just yesterday, as an intern doctor, I was in an ambulance to transfer an 81-year-old patient to a larger hospital. The ambulance was hit by the stones of the settlers and stopped many times by the Israeli troops.”

This is the reality for AbuAlrub and other Palestinians living in the West Bank, where over 700 road obstacles — including 140 armed checkpoints — limit their mobility. These roadblocks, along with the continuously expanding Israeli settlements that are illegal under international law, mean that AbuAlrub can’t get to work or visit his family without being humiliated as he passes through crowded checkpoints controlled by heavily armed soldiers.

The situation is no better for Palestinians elsewhere. “Death to Arabs! Death to Arabs!” These were the shouts that Jewish citizens of Israel directed at Suhail Matar, a graduate student in psychology at New York University who attended the Technion in Haifa, Israel from 2004 to 2011. “During this time,” Matar says, “Israel carried out three wars: the 2006 war on Lebanon, 2008–2009 war on Gaza, and 2010 attack on the flotilla headed for Gaza.” Each of these wars left devastating effects on Gaza, killing altogether more than 3800 Palestinians, including 700 children. “Every single time, across the street there were… huge Israeli flags, enraged Zionists jumping up and down yelling.” These were no strangers to Matar. “[Among them was] my physical chemistry professor, for example. He used to show up to lectures in full settler regalia. Imagine a U.S. professor showing up to class in Proud Boys or KKK regalia.”

Israeli law discriminates against Palestinian citizens of Israel in the provision of housing, employment, education, and most other aspects of their lives. Under the “Jewish nation-state” law, “the right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people.” This, along with the regular confiscation and destruction of Palestinian homes and land in Israel, is what led the Human Rights Watch to conclude that Israel’s actions “amount to the crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution.”

“On May 10th, the aggressive attacks on Gaza began,” explains Noor Zaki Al-kilani, an architecture student at the University of Palestine. “These attacks felt different and more aggressive than those in the past, targeting our roads and infrastructure for communication and electricity.” Attacks on media buildings, banks, outlet malls, learning centers, and roads to hospitals in Gaza are all meant to cripple the economic and social life of Palestinians even after a ceasefire is reached. Al-kilani was in her last semester when the attacks began. “While I should be focusing on my final master’s research, due to be delivered in August, the deaths of so many people and children have had such a large impact on me that it is hard to work.”

“When the bombing of Gaza began… there was no thinking of anything else.” Salah Ibrahim Eleyan is a bachelor’s student in physics from the Islamic University of Gaza, which was also targeted and destroyed by Israel in the latest bombardments. “All we could do was follow the news about the massacres and victims all around us. As the bombings continued, no house in Gaza was safe.” Eleyan adds, “For a moment, I sat there thinking only of the other victims my age, who also had big dreams of the future. I wondered if I would be next.”

One such student was Shaima Abu Aloof, a talented third-year student at Al-Azhar University in Gaza. She was studying to be a dentist, with the goal of pursuing her dream career in Gaza. She was described by her professors and friends as “hardworking, understanding, and determined to reach her goals.” She was recently engaged and in the process of planning her wedding party right after the end of Ramadan this year. On May 16th, Israeli airstrikes targeted and killed Shaima and her entire family.

The United States has repeatedly defended these egregious attacks and blatant violations of international law as Israel’s “right to self-defense.” American funding of these crimes amounts to $3.8 billion in military aid each year. Israel’s ability to commit war crimes with impunity not only shows a neglect for human rights, but also a clear motive to destroy Palestinians psychologically and physically. The latest Israeli airstrikes killed 65 children. That is enough children to fill three U.S. primary school classrooms — children who could have grown up to become artists, scientists, writers, and engineers.

Despite Israel’s goal of destroying the hope of Palestinians, however, their hearts remain strong. “The Israeli occupation tried for 70 years to limit our education and research and prevent us from building our country,” AbuAlrub says. “However, Palestinians are still alive. And we will send this message to every corner on Earth until we achieve freedom. We will prove to the whole world the type of scientists and doctors we are, those who could help humanity!”

Amro Alshareef is a member of the MIT Class of 2020.

GUEST COLUMN

Free Palestine

A letter to Palestine from Indigenous Black America

By Kelvin Green II

I stand in solidarity with you. My heart longs for you. I know what it is to be oppressed. I know what genocide is; I have felt the generational consequences of its violent manifestation. I have had to lick my own wounds, because the world was not yet wise enough to know my plight and act righteously. I know what it is to be forcibly displaced, to be silenced and censored, to be hungry and thirsty and sick and denied food and water and help. I know what it means to have my acts of self-defense spun in a narrative to justify an oppressor’s violence. I know what it means for the world to ignore what I declare with truth because it is too busy thinking about what those with power and resources have said. I know fear politics and I know the challenge of combating its attractive call in a world proselytizing fear and lies.

I know, because despite our different countries, contexts, and conditions, you and I are bound together, and thus our liberation is tied to that of each other. I cannot think of my own displacement and not think of you. I cannot think of my own genocide and not feel my own and yours together. The world’s neglect of you is a sign that they never really learned from me. They would much rather see apartheid and colonialism persist in the world without critique, untouched.

> **I know what it means to have my acts of self-defense spun in a narrative to justify an oppressor’s violence.**

Free Palestine!

I know that you are burying your dead if you are able to do so, healing your wounded, feeding your hungry, healing your sick, clothing your naked, and defending your humanity and your right to exist on the land you and your ancestors lived, loved, and thrived on — a land now occupied by the Israeli government, which is funded by the United States. Even in writing about you, I find myself mulling over the words of Toni Morrison: “Language can never pin down slavery, genocide, war, nor should it yearn for the arrogance to be able to do so. Its force, its felicity is in its reach toward the ineffable. Be it grand or slender, burrowing, blasting, or refusing to sanctify, whether it laughs out loud or is a cry without an alphabet, the choice word, the chosen silence, unmolested language surges toward knowledge, not its destruction.”

> **The world’s neglect of you is a sign that they never really learned from me.**

So, to heed Morrison’s lessons, I do not want to attempt to explicate all that you are experiencing. What I want to do is offer you hope in solidarity. I want to offer you hope that stems from the tradition of liberation movements in the world. There was a time when the plight of the tribes who lived on the land occupied by the United States went unheard. There was a time when the plight of the descendants of enslaved Africans become African-Americans went unheard. Do not judge the size of the wave by the perceived shallowness of the tide. This battle is not over. With every person arriving to knowledge of your plight and convicted to act even in the midst of language like “conflict,” “both sides,” and other neutralizing terms which minimize what is happening, your movement, which is our interconnected movement, continuously grows stronger.

So, Palestine, I tell you that you are forever in my heart. I will not forget you. I will fight with you.

Brick-by-brick, wall-by-wall, apartheid has to fall!

From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free!

Palestine will never die! Palestine will never die!

> **Do not judge the size of the wave by the perceived shallowness of the tide. This battle is not over.**

In solidarity,
A child of the Mattaponi, Pamunkey, Chickahominy, and enslaved Africans become African-Americans,
Kelvin Green II

Kelvin Green II ’22 is a member of Chocolate City and the Rho Nu Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. and the outgoing Assistant Officer on Diversity for the Undergraduate Association.

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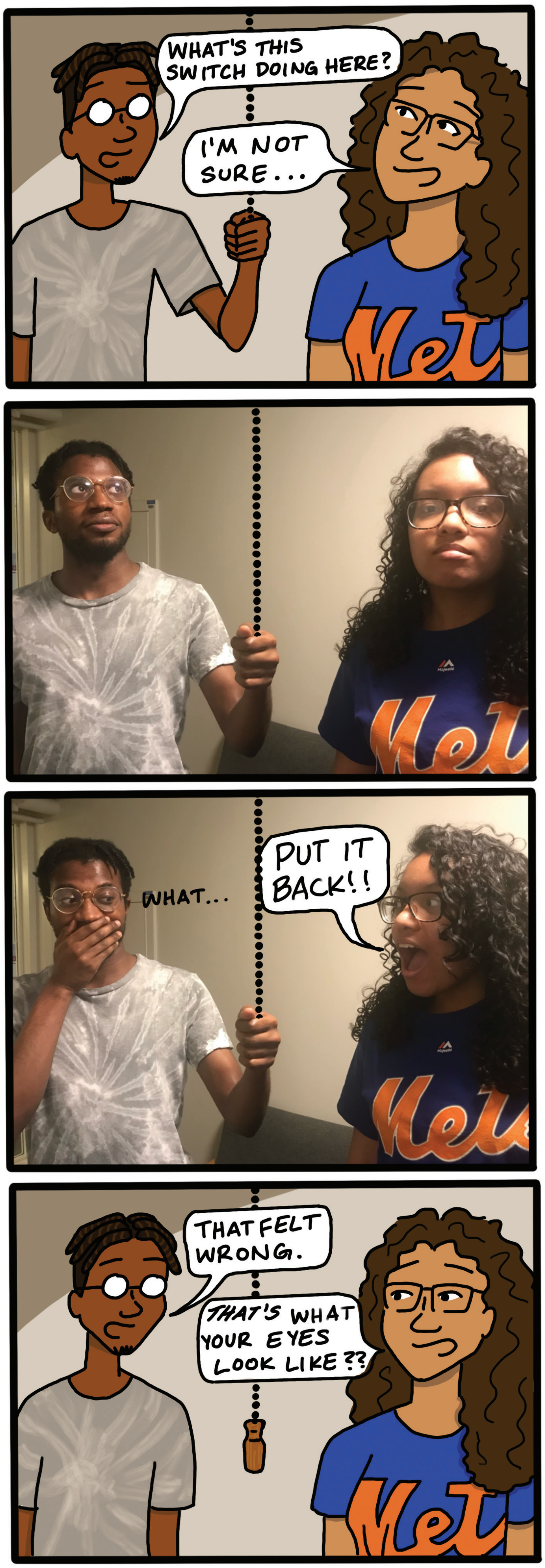
FEDERAL RESERVE NOTE
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
GL 64739922 A
L12
THIS NOTE IS LEGAL TENDER FOR ALL DEBTS, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE
SERIES 2004 A
Treasurer of the United States.
Secretary of the Treasury.
We the People
10
TEN
DOLLARS
HAMILTON

PNR
PROCRASTINATE. NAP. REPEAT.

Switch

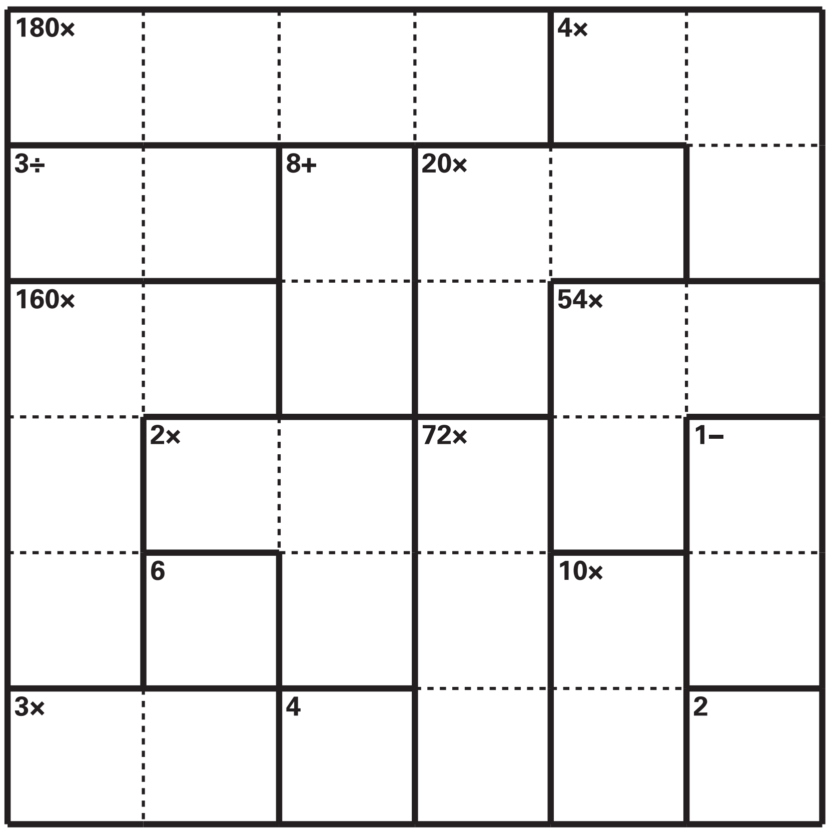
by Alina Sarmiento


WHAT'S THIS SWITCH DOING HERE?
I'M NOT SURE...
WHAT...
PUT IT BACK!!
THAT FELT WRONG.
THAT'S WHAT YOUR EYES LOOK LIKE??

the world works in mysterious ways

See You

Solution, page 3


180×
4×
3÷
8+
20×
160×
54×
2×
72×
1−
6
10×
3×
4
2

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column and row contains exactly one of each of the numbers 1–6. Follow the mathematical operations for each box.

Later

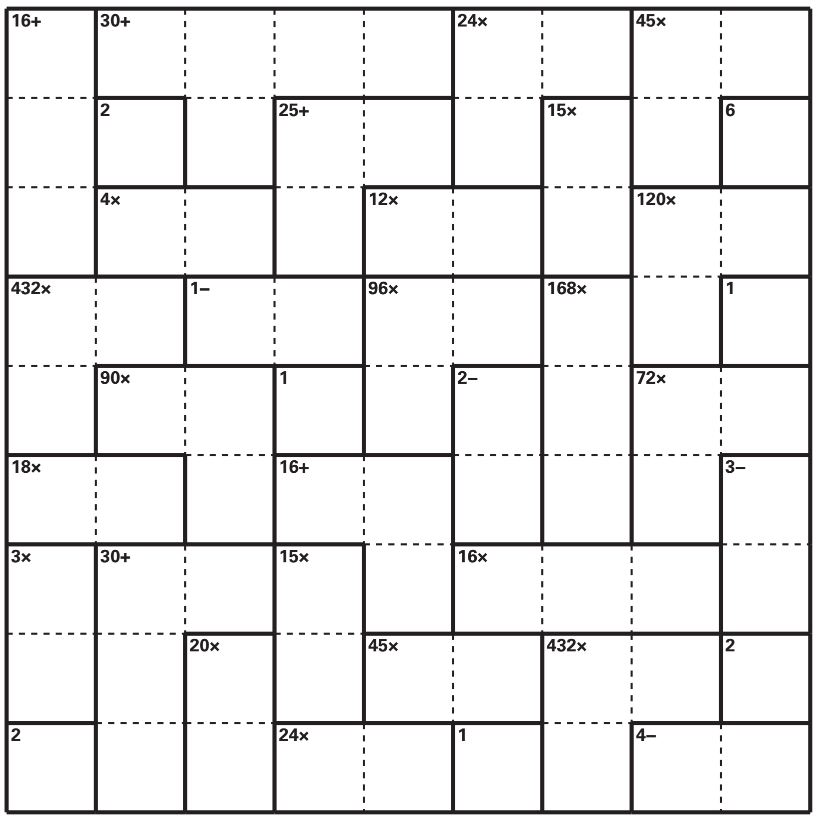
Solution, page 3

9				7				2
		6			2	5	9	
4		2						8
		7	9		8	4		1
6		4	3		5	8		
8						9		3
	6	9	2			1		
1				5				6

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column, row, and 3 by 3 grid contains exactly one of each of the digits 1 through 9.

Alligator

Solution, page 3


16+
30+
24×
45×
2
25+
15×
6
4×
12×
120×
432×
1−
96×
168×
1
90×
1
2−
72×
18×
16+
3−
3×
30+
15×
16×
20×
45×
432×
2
2
24×
1
4−

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column and row contains exactly one of each of the numbers 1–9. Follow the mathematical operations for each box.

In a While

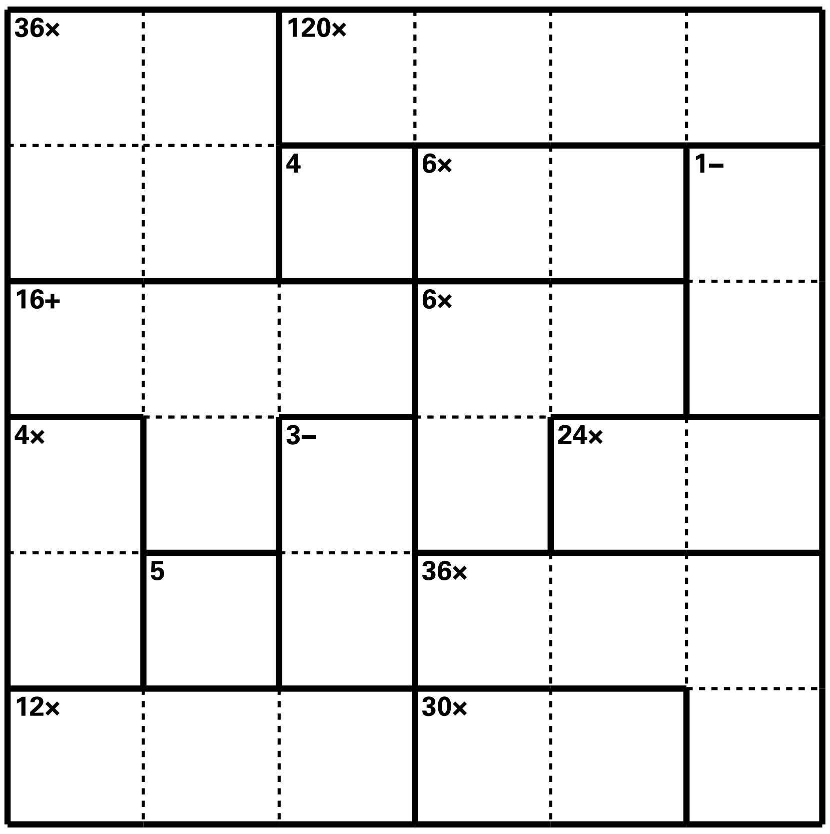
Solution, page 3

3		9	2					1
						9	5	
		1			6		2	8
	1			4	2			
		5	1		3	8		
			6	8			1	
1	9		3			4		
	3	7						
6					1	2		9

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column, row, and 3 by 3 grid contains exactly one of each of the digits 1 through 9.

Crocodile

Solution, page 3



Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column and row contains exactly one of each of the numbers 1–6. Follow the mathematical operations for each box.

At the Bar by Brad Wilber

Solution, page 3

1	2	3	4	5	■	6	7	8	9	■	10	11	12	13
14					■	15				■	16			
17					■	18				■	19			
20					21					■	22			
■	■	■	■	23			■	■	24	25		■	■	■
26	27	28	29			■	30	31				32	33	■
34				■	■	35					■	36		37
38				39	40						41			
42			■	43					■	■	44			
■	45		46					■	47	48				
■	■	■	49			■	■	50			■	■	■	■
51	52	53		■	54	55	56				57	58	59	60
61				■	62				■	63				
64				■	65				■	66				
67				■	68				■	69				

ACROSS

1 Entryways
6 Make a sound of fright
10 In no danger
14 Taj Mahal's country
15 Sch. near Beverly Hills
16 Ship's docking place
17 Full of rocks, as a beach
18 Sailor's greeting
19 Brainstorm
20 Wine bottle openers
22 Scarlet and crimson
23 Head's gesture of agreement
24 Tax deduction expert: Abbr.
26 Movie director's "Start!"
30 "Should all of us do this?"
34 Raisin __ cereal
35 Large antlered animal
36 60-min. periods
38 Hand-held martini mixers
42 __-fi (outer-space stories)
43 Apportion, as budget money
44 Remove clothes wrinkles
45 Sculptures of people in parks
47 Seniors to "respect"
49 River barrier
50 "Without further __ . . ."
51 Corporate symbol
54 Containers for keeping Champagne cool
61 Right away, in a memo
62 Seagoing military force
63 Tennis great Agassi
64 Narrow fabric cut
65 Puts into service
66 Valid reasoning
67 2,000-pound measures
68 Untidy room
69 Cleaned off with a broom

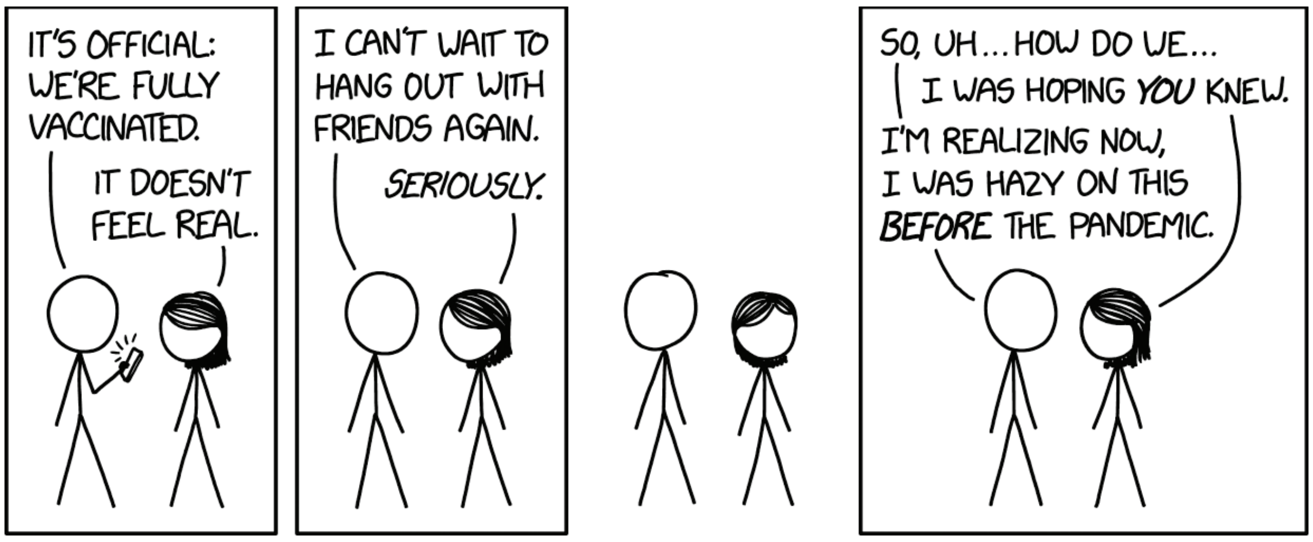
DOWN

1 Hockey puck shape
2 Hold __ (keep)
3 Aroma
4 Indoor skating venue
5 Refuses a request
6 Sentry at a bank
7 Muscle soreness
8 Reduce one's speed
9 Hands over dollars and cents
10 Winding staircase shape
11 Assistant
12 Serve a meal to
13 Historical periods
21 Negative side of a debate
25 Urgent request for help
26 First lessons in reading
27 Gators' cousins
28 Unspoken yet understood
29 Liquid in a pen
30 Songs sung alone
31 Person running a party
32 "In what place?"
33 Mistake
35 Marathon measure
37 Nine-digit government IDs: Abbr.
39 "Bye-bye!"
40 Kitchen foil metal
41 Baby goat
46 Takes in, as a rescue dog
47 College Web address ender
48 People who live nearby
50 Bottomless pit
51 Be durable
52 Capital of Norway
53 "No pain, no __"
55 Violin container
56 Days before holidays
57 Be acquainted with
58 Slight advantage
59 Vacation excursion
60 Religious offshoot

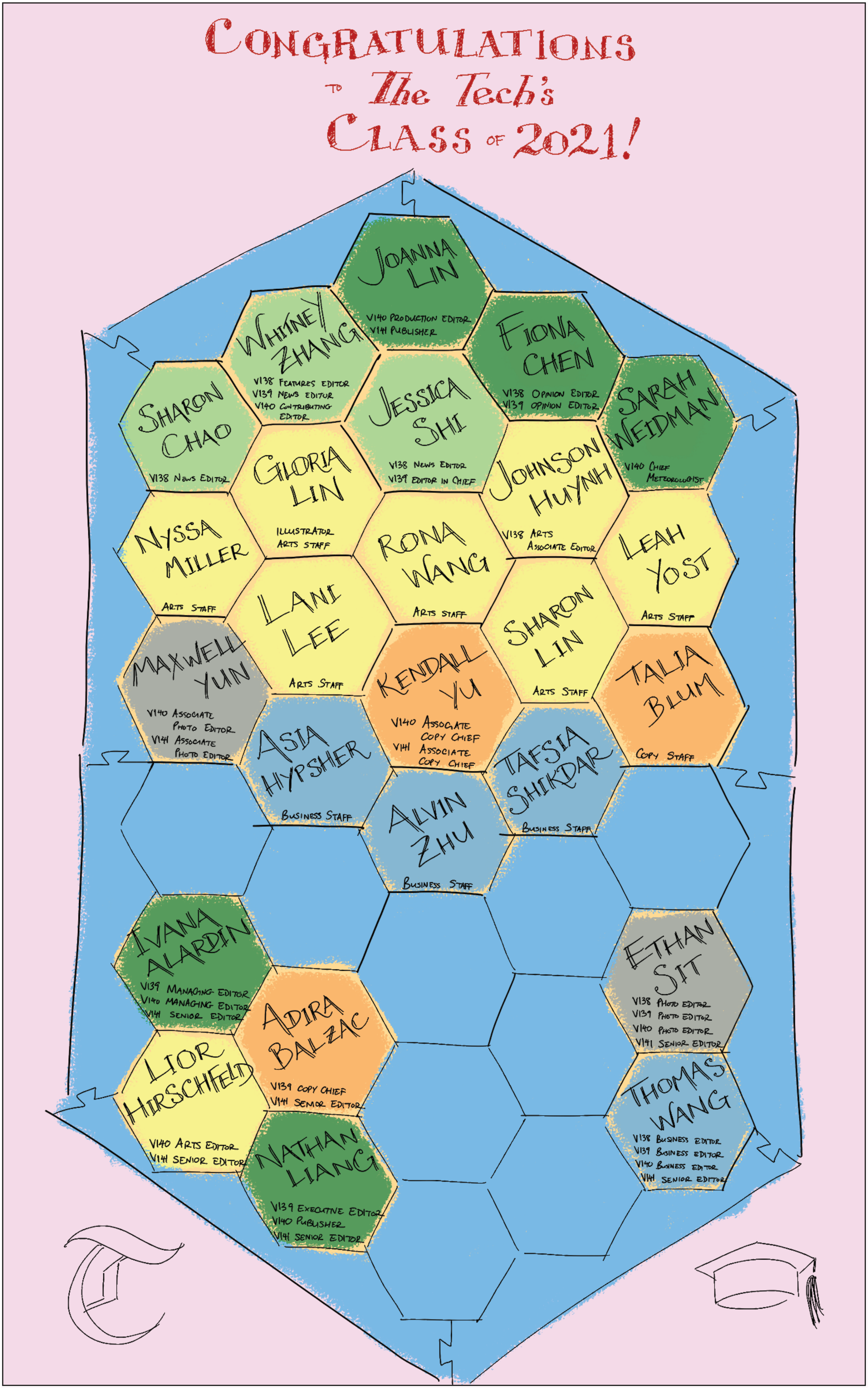
xkcd

A webcomic of romance, sarcasm, math, and language
by Randall Munroe

[2460] Vaccinated


IT'S OFFICIAL: WE'RE FULLY VACCINATED.
IT DOESN'T FEEL REAL.
I CAN'T WAIT TO HANG OUT WITH FRIENDS AGAIN.
SERIOUSLY.
SO, UH... HOW DO WE...
I WAS HOPING YOU KNEW.
I'M REALIZING NOW, I WAS HAZY ON THIS BEFORE THE PANDEMIC.

I built a model that combines local case rates and vaccination stats to estimate when it's reasonable to attend various types of party, but I forgot to include anything about where to find them.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CURSED THOUGHTS

This story is not over

Some reflections at the start of Pride Month

By Ana Reyes Sánchez
EDITOR

CW: homophobia (internalized and external), brief mention of suicide, descriptions of surgery, brief mentions of sexual assault

Second Grade

His hair is spiky and gelled up. *I want to touch it*, I tell the friends I've made so far. They giggle and tell me that I have a crush. I don't quite know what that means, but I play along.

When we're let out for recess, I chase after him on the playground. Eventually, when I get tired of being avoided, I go to sulk next to the water fountain. My friends force him to hand me a flower, and I take it. I'm disappointed by the gesture even though some part of me understands, even that young, that flowers mean you *like-like* someone.

I wonder if what I'm feeling is actually a crush, but everyone — my friends, my parents, my sister — insists. Still, I don't want a flower; I want to sit next to him in the library and read books together.

Eighth Grade

His name is Erik, and he makes me smile. I spend thirty minutes after school walking with him, avoiding two other students in my class who want to eavesdrop. I think I know what's happening, but I'm not going to ask, in case I'm wrong.

Eventually, when we've gotten far enough away, he asks me to the Valentine's Day dance. I've never been to a dance with someone before. I say yes. I wear my sister's old red and black dress, and my mom helps style my hair.

In my school's tiny cafeteria, we slow dance awkwardly but not uncomfortably.

Afterwards, we sit outside eating McDonald's vanilla ice cream cones. I feel my fingers get sticky from the sugar. When we eventually break up, he complains that I never held his hand. Apparently, he had put it between us. I wonder how I was supposed to notice that.

Ninth Grade

We meet because my friend Sophie looks nervous talking to her. She's leaning against a wall, arms crossed, looking disinterested in Sophie's well-practiced welcome speech. It's an ice cream social, but she's not there to meet people. It's ninth grade — no one's there to meet people.

When I walk up, ready to save Sophie from her predicament, she looks at me suspiciously. I ask her name. It's too close to my own, so I tell her I'm going to call her Ash. I don't say it, but she seems too cool to have a name as boring as mine. My parents call it a nickname and try to use her actual name. But it's not quite a nickname, not quite a name. Seven years later, I know it's a ritual.

We spend the rest of the time until her mom gets there talking about SuperWhoLock and Tumblr memes and tentacles. Watching her mom's Prius pull out of the parking lot, I resolve to be her friend.

I go to school the next day and sit next to her at lunch. She pushes me off the bench that she's sitting on and tells me that she doesn't want company. I fall in love, a little bit. But I don't recognize it as love yet.

I ask what she's listening to through her earbuds and she rolls her eyes when she tells me it's My Chemical Romance. It's another three weeks of trying to sit next to her at lunch before she hands me an earbud and tells me to listen. I don't remember what the first song was, but I take a moment to memorize every band that she mentions that lunch period: Sleeping with Sirens, MCR, Three Days Grace, Black Veil Brides.

Two weeks later, I hold her hand and she tells me she's asexual. I've seen the word floating around on Tumblr before, but it's the first time that I say the syllables. They fit awkwardly in my mouth, but it seems important to her that I say them back.

That night, I discover the words "panromantic demisexual." It feels like a eureka moment. I mouth the shape of them, but I don't say them aloud.

A couple of months later, Ethan Smith plays a cover of a song at the end-of-the-year pep rally. I bounce up and down screaming the lyrics, even though I haven't quite learned the song yet. When we exit the cafeteria, I turn immediately to hug her. For the first few seconds all I can feel are her arms around me, her chest pressed to mine. I'm wearing one of those Dollar Tree beaded necklaces, and I hope it doesn't dig into her. I want the imprint of the beads to stay on my skin forever.

That day, the wrong teacher sees us hugging outside. She forces us into the vice principal's office and says something about having warned Ash about PDA before. Sitting in front of the vice principal, a tall, long-faced man, I wonder why we're getting in trouble when we're not even dating. I try to insist when he's about to call my parents — *Mr. H, we're just friends* — but he doesn't buy it.

It feels wrong to use the word "just" when my feelings are all bunched up in my chest. They're seeing something, I think. Maybe it's the same thing that people saw in second grade.

When my parents show up, I sit quietly in the plastic chair I was directed into. I know my parents aren't homophobic, a fact my vice principal seems disappointed about. I'm let off with a warning and the knowledge that I've done something wrong, but I can't place what.

In the car, I repeat *my uncle is gay* in my head until I feel like I can make it stick.

My uncle is gay. My family loves me. My parents sit me down and tell me that I can't be friends with Ash anymore.

That night, I look up the Gilbert Public School District's policy on PDA and whether or not it applies to friendship. I know that straight couples sit on top of each other while they wait for their parents, but maybe people see something different in them.

Distantly, I'm aware that this is homophobia, but I don't understand its shape.

We're friends, I think. I try to describe the ache in my chest, but everyone only confirms what people are telling me. In ninth grade, I learn — friends don't ache for each other.

Tenth Grade

Everyone at my school tells me that I am a lesbian. I imprint the words — panromantic demisexual — into the lining of my stomach and say nothing.

"Lesbian" feels like a dirty word. Lesbians are something forbidden, searched for only late at night. I associate the word with shame and bury it.

Ash always waits an hour after school for her mom to get off work. When it's time for her to go, we fight over her violin case. I don't want her to leave me, yet. We're still not dating, but I guess we aren't friends either.

Once again, the wrong teacher sees us. As Ash heads to her mom's car, Mrs. L corners me outside the cafeteria. *I saw you,* she hisses at me. *I saw you holding hands, and I won't hesitate to bring it to the office.*

I try to insist that we weren't holding hands, we were just teasing each other, but something in me stalls. I feel like she knows the secret I've got pounding in my chest. We weren't holding hands, but I wanted to be.

Shaking, I get into my mom's car when she gets to school. She asks me how my day went. *It was fine.* This secret has made me a liar.

Close to Christmas break, when the fear of being caught isn't so overwhelming, Ash and I are standing next to a water fountain. *I ache for you*, I think. She's standing so close that I can smell her deodorant.

I understand why people say that they're captured by eyes. I only spend a moment thinking about how I want to kiss her before I do it. I miss her mouth by a fraction, but it doesn't feel like a mistake.

Several months later, when we're holding hands in the top bunk of her bed, she kisses me back, dead center. She says it's our first kiss, and I don't correct her.

We get in trouble again. Not for PDA, this time, but for bullying. *Stupid, stupid, stupid*, I think. Amy Johnson's mom is the head of the PTA.

Sitting in the now principal's office for the second time with Ash and Amy, my stomach lurches. My parents wince when Mr. H pulls up screenshots of the text messages we had sent to Amy.

I don't understand how we bullied Amy when she was the one that texted *I just don't think gay people should act on instincts* and *hate the sin, not the sinner* in our group chat. Still, it's been years since I understood what everyone else seems to immediately know.

Mr. H makes us apologize to Amy. When my parents and I go home, my dad says that it was brave for me to say "I'M GAY" immediately following her messages, but that maybe it was too loud. I know he's teasing, but my mom scoffs anyway. She tells me that in her Mexican elementary school, girls were always holding hands with each other and it didn't have to mean anything. I don't say that it means something to me. I spend weeks longing for my mom's elementary school life.

I can't say that we're not dating anymore. Even I know that you don't kiss friends.

We get sloppy. A new vice principal sees me kiss Ash on the cheek. After Ash gets picked up, I'm cornered again, next to the water fountain where we shared our first kiss. She knows that I have a history of getting in trouble for this. *The next time*, she says, *it'll be suspension.*

When I get home, I lay my head in my mom's lap. I ask her what she would do if she had a friend that she loved, but the love might risk her own future. She tells me that she would end the relationship.

I think about MIT and how I've spent the past couple of years justifying sacrifices to get in. It's a sticky dream and I've sunk deeper in it than I think I have.

I break up with Ash over text because I'm a coward. I reassure her that we'll still be friends but say that I need to think about my future. I spend the next day at school avoiding her and talking with the friends I had before.

When I was younger, my parents explained what a C-section was and why my mom had that scar on her belly. She told me how the anesthesiologist had messed up her dose and she woke up in the middle of surgery. It didn't hurt, apparently, but she could feel people touching her organs.

That day after I get home from school, my chest tightens painfully. I lie down with my head dangling over my bed's edge. I'm certain, for a second, that this is what it would feel like to wake up during surgery. *This is why you aren't supposed to touch the secret inside*, I think.

The following day, I slip my hand back into Ash's. I know I'm being selfish, but I'm not brave enough to say anything. The ache in my chest settles familiarly.

We're more careful, this time. We look both ways before touching. We don't kiss in public.

We both join STEM and learn that not all of our teachers care about us holding hands. I spend the remainder of the year in Mr. G's classroom and feel my heart racing whenever our touches linger.

When school's almost out for the summer, Erik asks if we can talk outside our classroom. I haven't spoken to him in nearly a year, despite our school being so small, but I agree.

We're looking at the clouds in the sky. He takes a sharp breath and says the words, "I'm bisexual." I don't really understand why he's telling me, but I thank him for saying it anyway. He explains that it felt right to say this to me since I was his first girlfriend. I don't know where the impulse comes from but I tell him, "I'm dating Ash."

I ask him who else he's told and he says, *no one*. He's the first person I've told too. We watch the clouds for a second more before heading back inside.

Twelfth Grade

I fall in love twice more, but it's not romantic, I think. I still don't really understand the difference, but I'm dating Ash so I pretend I do. Ash had started using the word "lesbian" at some point during junior year, but I still bite back the words "panromantic demisexual." Saying "lesbian" still feels dirty, so I start using "gay."

The next person I fall in love with is a girl named Kylie. She's not that much younger than me, but I instinctively want to protect her. I wonder if I'm cheating on Ash because the ache in my chest is also for her.

Kylie has another friend, Coraline, who is sick. Not physically, but mentally. I spend the majority of that year trying to take care of the two of them. My parents beg me to let other people handle it, but I'm too stuck in my head to listen. I wonder if I might also be in love with Coraline because my heart burns hot whenever I'm around her.

It's not the same as what I feel with Ash, but this is what they describe in the movies. The feeling is anxious and ravenous and clawing at my chest. For the first time, it's not an ache.

Kylie and Coraline want to go to homecoming with me and a couple of other friends. I turn to Ash instinctively to ask what colors she'll wear as my date. She seems lost about it, and admits that she hadn't realized we were dating. I'm confused. I thought, *surely*, this instance was one I had gotten right.

I write her a letter officially asking to date. She tells me that she's sorry, we've been dating this whole time, but she was confused after our break up. I feel the wind knocked out of me. I'm starting to understand that Ash cares more about labels than I do.

The second person I fall in love with that year is my mentor. He's tall and goofy and I look to him for advice more than anyone else I know.

My friends tease me for having a crush, and I worry that they are seeing that secret inside of me again. I've gotten tired of explaining that all love is the same, but it's expressed differently for different people. I still don't understand why people argue back, but I try to feel more okay with it.

I write him a twenty-page letter halfway through the fall semester asking for advice on anything that I find the courage to communicate.

I write that I don't understand my identity. I don't know who I am yet, even though people keep telling me. He tells me that it's okay. Too often we try to mold ourselves into something that isn't actually us. He mentions Sartre.

We talk about the things I wrote; we talk more about the things I didn't.

Included in the letter is everything I wanted to say, but couldn't. Written in the margins is an expression of love.

I bury it inside of myself and promise that I won't ever tell anyone that I love this man. Love feels like too big of a word now, with apparently too many implications.

Coraline gets more sick. She's suicidal and manic, which are two words that she teaches me. I tell her *I love you* when she calls me in the middle of the night. I start checking my messages obsessively, and my parents worry that I'm too close to my phone. They feel further from me than they've ever been.

It builds.

I'm writing my MIT application essays on the phone with my sister. She asks me to dig deeper than my extracurriculars or my relationship with our parents. I think about Ash. I think about love. I admit to my sister, for the first time, that I don't think I feel sexual attraction the same way other people do.

I send my essays to the mentor I met at the beginning of the year, and he writes comments in the margins. He thanks me for sending them to him. When I finally send in my application, it feels more like a whimper than a bang.

I wonder if this is why I've kept that secret inside myself for so long. I think about every time that I've reached for Ash's hand only for her to whisper back to me, *You want to go to MIT, don't you?*

I know that I've ruined something for the both of us. But I won't get into MIT without keeping it hidden. For the first time, it doesn't feel worth it.

Kylie comes over to my house one day, and we work on my final philosophy project together. I show her the way my project uses pictures, flipping one after the other. I explain that life is a series of moments.

She drinks some of the chai my mom made and doesn't eat any Oreos.

She leaves after an hour, maybe. I don't try to stop her.

That night, I turn my notification volume all the way up and refuse to sleep. I write and rewrite *And the Joy of Living* and think about her.

I imagine Kylie dying, being told one day that she's gone, out of the blue. It's not the first time that I've played out this mental experiment, but it is the last.

That night, Kylie tries to kill herself. She's sent off to the hospital, and someone tells me at school the next day. A part of me feels left behind; I wonder if she's the one who's taken what's supposed to fill that gaping ache in my chest.

I sit on the floor of my teacher's room after school and cry. I write bad poetry. I send her text messages, knowing she won't see them, but hoping she'll check her phone later. I wait.

When I get into MIT, I scream. I tell my teacher and eat cereal in his classroom.

Kylie gets back from the hospital. I feel happy, but not whole.

I write that my head is full of little paper scraps. I tell this to my mentor, and he says he understands. I ask him, again, for advice on what to do. I'm not sure where to start, but he helps me break it down.

I worry I caused Kylie's hospitalization.

I'm not sure I want to go to MIT.

I don't know what to do about my relationship with Ash.

We spend the majority of the time talking about love, a conversation I start by saying, *so… you know I'm gay, right?*

Later, I will tell this story with a grin. Later, I will have playlists with titles like if you can't tell im gay by literally everything about me, then… and I will write pages about how my love aches.

In that room, I feel like I've stepped into crossfire. He already knew, of course. I'd sent him those college essays.

After twenty minutes of thick silence, I finally confess that I love Ash, but not in the way that people tell me is enough. I'm not crazy about her. I'm not sure what passion feels like. I don't know if it'll last at MIT.

I break up with Ash again, in person this time. We walk in circles around the school and I worry that she'll misunderstand this to mean I don't love her anymore. I try to explain that love doesn't have to mean romance, but it feels like a cop out. I end up babbling about Kantian ethics and treating people as ends.

The senior class goes on our retreat. I'm staying in a bunk with Ash, and it feels kind of weird, but it would feel weirder to be apart. I get lost in the woods without water. I think that it wouldn't be bad to stay there forever.

Eventually, I make it back. Mr. H pulls me aside to say that we'll talk about it later. It's been years since I've interacted with him, but fear burns clearly through me.

When we come back from senior retreat, Coraline tries to kill herself. She tells the administration that another friend of ours sold her the drugs they found in her backpack and they both get suspended for a week. Our principal and vice principal question all of our friends to see whether I had anything to do with it. I didn't, but I'm used to them not believing me by this point.

They end up finding no evidence and don't call home, but I tell my mom about it anyway. I'm tired of keeping secrets. I cry, wrapped up in her arms, and she tells me that I can't be friends with Coraline anymore. It's a testament to the fact that I don't love Coraline that my bones don't ache when I stop talking to her.

I graduate high school heartbroken. I fly out to MIT for the Interphase EDGE program that I'd applied to after being admitted. I read a story about two characters, where one tells the other that he carries the imprints of everyone he's loved in himself. I cry in the airport waiting for the plane to Massachusetts.

Freshman Spring

I switch dorms. After 4 hours of waiting, I finally move in to my room — #3152.

Every part of my body is thirsting for family, community, love. I spend the first night in New House crying while FaceTiming Kylie, and I'm certain that no one here loves me.

One night later, I find myself bumping into my future big, Ruth, in a hallway. I ask her about the trash room, and she asks if I want to go grocery shopping. I had already gotten groceries, but I feel an urge to go again. Instinct says that this is important, but it's been a while since I've trusted instinct.

I open my door slightly more and reveal the pride flag hanging visibly above my bed.

She says, *I think we're going to be good friends.*

It's a perfect line.

Months later, I find the perfect metaphor to go along with it and plaster it on everything — our friendship is like baking bread. You put in dough, uncooked, and then, however many hours later, you pull out bread. When did the dough become bread? Even if you watched the oven for hours, you wouldn't be able to tell.

Ruth invites me to my first recruitment event. My freshman spring, I join a sorority.

I was lonely during the fall, but now I'm not. It's overwhelming.

I fall in love, quickly and easily, with this group of people that loves me back. I think about how similar it all feels, how I still don't really understand the difference.

Before initiation, we have a sleepover at New House. I'm not sure how to express my gratitude. I don't know how to explain how unique it is that I don't doubt I am loved in return. I still don't know if it's the same kind, but I think I'm okay with that.

I haven't felt safe on campus in quite some time. I feel safe sleeping on the floor of Ruth's room in New House, lying next to my future sorority twin.

After initiation, I spend a lot of time thinking about our ritual — a secret that's hidden in plain sight. *I've spent a lot of time carrying secrets*, I think, *despite being out*. I've been using the word "queer" in college because I like that it's an umbrella term. The words "panromantic demisexual" don't fit in my mouth anymore.

I spend a lot of time talking about love and relationships with another member at Tech Calling. They ask me, at one point, how it doesn't hurt to talk to Ash so regularly. We've kept in touch despite our break up, though it's not as frequent as in high school.

I tell them that love is a very fluid thing for me. There is no clear difference between platonic and romantic love. They tell me that they could never swap between the two with an ex like I am. But it's not swapping for me. I love Ash the same as I did in ninth grade when I saw the weird combination of green and blue and yellow in her eyes.

I talk to my big and twin every day at New House. We form a habit of climbing into one bed and talking loudly about our secrets. I share a lot of things with them, but I don't share this yet.

Sophomore Fall

I come back from the summer more drained than I was when it started. I try saying "sexual assault survivor" for the first time and hate the way it sits in my mouth. I've always understood that words have power, and I don't like the power these exert over me. I don't want people to know, but I flinch when my friends touch me.

I tell a friend about the mentor I had in high school and everything I felt about him. She looks at me weirdly and says that my feelings aren't normal. *I think you had a crush,* she says.

I don't know how to explain that I yearn for everyone. I'm too tired to try.

Some of my students are worried about one of their classmates interacting with my ex. They ask me to talk to her, so I hesitantly send her a message.

My words are clumsy. I have no explanations for why I was assaulted. I don't know why I didn't stop it. I try to explain to the student that my love is different from other people's, and it's easy for me to misunderstand it.

I tell her about how I prefer using the word "partner." I think about Coraline and how that feeling had carved into my stomach. I think about Ash and how our love only burned when we wanted it to.

Loving my ex was like loving Coraline, I tell her. And it wasn't love at all.

She doesn't understand. She asks me, *So you just love anyone who pays attention to you?*

I feel like I've been slapped, but I smile anyway. Eventually, I won't think I was at fault for my assault. Eventually, I will have a response to her question.

I think about everything I could have done differently to stop my assault from happening.

When I head back from Simmons, I collapse on top of my big and cry because there is something inside of me that's struggling to get out. I'm comfortable with the word "queer," but people still don't get it. This secret is trapped. It has been for years.

She misunderstands what's causing my anguish. She convinces me that I can switch from my double to a single.

I'm tired, probably because of the past couple of weeks. I don't want to move, don't want to pack and unpack all of my things. She helps me start anyway and assures me that she'll help me move everything in the morning. I've never had someone help me pack that wasn't family.

I feel that familiar ache in my chest. I don't know how to communicate this big and important feeling to her. I don't know how to say, *This is enough, but I want this forever*. I don't want her to think that I want a relationship, so I say nothing.

Sophomore Spring

Ruth and I cook breakfast together every morning. On Saturdays, we go to Trader Joe's for groceries and laugh on the way back.

I still think of my life as a series of moments. I start capturing them when the sun is out, and laughter comes easy. Ruth is graduating this semester, but I don't think about it.

I fly home earlier than expected. My stomach feels like it's gaping open as Ruth helps me pack up what she had helped unpack the semester prior. I think about C-sections again when I tell her, *I don't know what my life at MIT is going to look like without you.*

At the airport, I think about *I want this forever* and feel slighted that we didn't get more time.

I write Ruth a letter with my love written plainly. It isn't in the margins, but its secrets are still hidden unless you know where to look. I ache for grocery shopping and speed eating dinner and watching Doctor Who from the comfort of my bed. It wasn't romance, but it is love.

When I'm home, I find out my parents have started a new tradition of fancy Friday night dinners. During one of them, my mom asks if I ever want to get married. I say I do. I ask them how to know who the right person is. My mom tells me, *When you find a husband… No, sorry. When you find a spouse, you'll feel it.*

I send a message to my big and twin about it because the change in noun feels like something important. That night, when I'm in bed, the ache is especially pronounced.

Junior Spring

My sister flies home during January and we spend a lot of time talking as a family. I make a joke about how much more difficult I was in high school, and aren't we all glad that I've mellowed out? My sister asks me, *why do you think you were more difficult in high school?*

There are a lot of answers I could give her. But I know that all the roads lead back to that first time, sitting in Mr. H's office when he was still just Vice Principal. I explain this to my sister and my parents mutter angrily about my school administration. *What homophobic nonsense*, my dad says. *We were furious with the school*, my mom says.

I sit on my stool around the countertop and tears leak out of my eyes without me noticing. My sister asks, *What's wrong?* I don't know how to explain how angry my parents had been. They turn to look at me now.

Surely, they say, *you know we weren't angry with you, right?*

I feel something jostle inside of me. *My uncle is gay,* I think. But don't say anything.

More tears fall from my eyes. It feels like a foundational part of my past is changing. I didn't do anything wrong. It just seems like everyone forgot to tell me that.

We banter in my sorority Slack about where love is located in the body.

I start a column about it in *The Tech*. The first article is about love. I see, for the first time, why other people don't see friendship and romance as the same. I see, though I don't really understand, how love sometimes only aches for the people you want a romantic relationship with.

I end the article by explaining what, exactly, a cursed thought is. *Please*, I beg, *know me*.

I keep writing the column and realize only after the semester has ended that all of my articles have been about love. This doesn't feel that big of a realization because love is all there is.

Ruth writes a letter back to the one that I wrote her. I've never gotten a response to one of these letters before, and I'm not quite sure what to do. She starts it by saying that communicating this feeling feels big and important, but she owes it to me to try.

I don't think anyone has owed something like that to me before. It aches to see my own feelings reciprocated in the handwritten pages. I feel less alone.

I fly back to MIT for the semester and meet, in person, two people that I psetted with in the fall. I get crushed by the realization that once again I have misplaced friendship and romance.

I don't ache for Boy, I write. It's difficult for me to ask someone on a date after everything, but I still do it. I'm not sure if my friends understand what I mean when I say love is the same. Still, I write about it in *The Tech*. *It doesn't matter if they don't understand it,* I think, *it's there.*

I'm on a Zoom call with friends. I direct message someone a joke instinctively. We're talking about a shared hyperfixation and, unsolicited and fully formed, the thought comes to me, *I want to live the rest of my life with you, just like this.*

I think about what I told that one student — how I prefer using the word "partner." I am partners with my friend. I don't want anything different, but I do want this — for as long as I can have it. I think about "*I want this forever.*" Maybe I'll tell this friend, too.

I send a Facebook message to another friend who I know will understand and share this beautiful, simple thought. For once in my life, I don't feel shame in just saying it.

It's been a long time since I've held the words "panromantic demisexual," but I dust them off in my head. I still prefer sharing the "queer" as my label. I think these are words worth knowing anyway.

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ME VS. ME

Graduation is not the end

The chapter is closing, the era is ending, and the heartache only grows

By Joanna Lin
PUBLISHER

It’s Commencement day! That used to mean you’d be using this very paper to fan yourself on Killian while a thousand students and their parents broiled in the Boston summer heat. While Commencement is virtual this year (again), the feelings that come with it could not be hitting harder.

> **I’ll miss the little groan non-MIT people let out when we ‘talk in numbers.’**

Like with any graduation, there’s a huge mixed bag of the *feels*. Pride, for completing an incredibly rigorous program, especially here at MIT. Excitement, to grow into the next stage of life. Heartbreak, at leaving behind the best of friends, the wisest of mentors, and the brightest of campuses. Maybe even surprise, at how much this place seems like home now.

For some (read: most), there is apprehension about what the very uncertain future will become. But a new feeling this year is loss. Two and a half semesters of remote operation is nothing to sneeze at. Classes for a few years to come will be marked by the pandemic. Anyone graduating this year has lost so much of what it means to be a regular college student, from chalk talks to dorm culture to end-of-semester a cappella and dance shows.

I belong to a small group of students who decided to graduate early specifically because of the pandemic. Still, we had our different reasons, like the financial prospects of jobs or simply wanting to be free from the tethers of an academic institution. Since remote dancing and journalism were so much less fulfilling to me, I personally wanted to divide my junior and senior years into a year of classes and a year of extracurriculars. But as life would have it, I probably won’t even be doing my extracurriculars in Boston all that much next year.

My peers have told me how sad it is to be like us: to have a postponed, then canceled Ring Delivery, miss out on Senior Ball, and get a virtual Commencement to top it all off. It seems like we’re getting the worst of both the Class of 2021 and the Class of 2022. We’re not really in a position to complain about it either, since we chose to graduate early.

But I can’t bring myself to be sad about those things. Maybe because I can’t really grasp what I’m losing.

> **What actually kills me about leaving is having to give up all the friends I would have met in the coming year.**

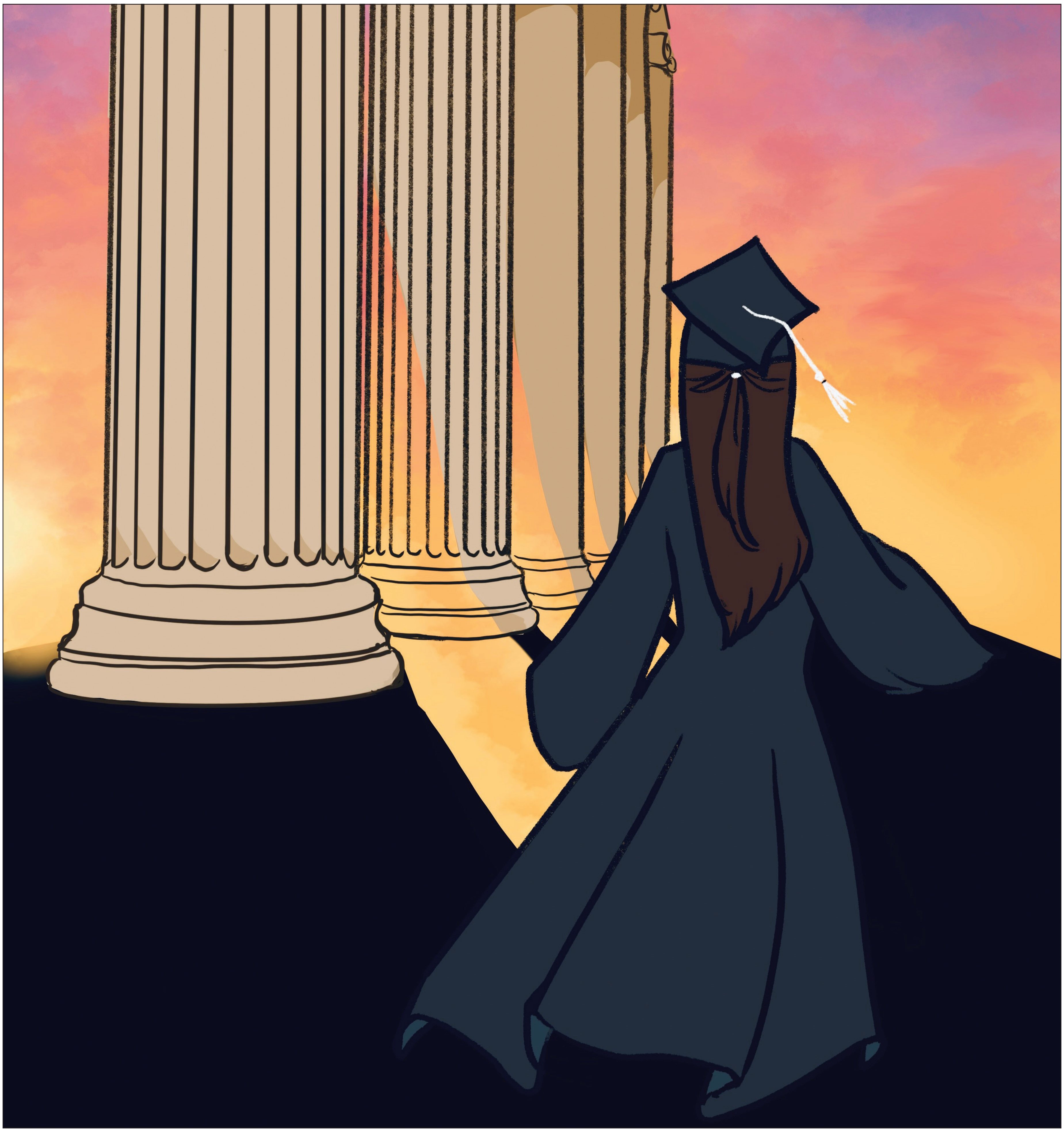
I’ll miss the way the hallway between Building 26 and Building 16 gets so excessively clogged between :55 and :05 every hour. I’ll miss trying to convince my advisees every fall that 5.112 is only for people who want to hate themselves around November and laughing come March when they vow to convince incoming frosh not to take it. I’ll miss the little groan non-MIT people let out when we “talk in numbers.”

I’ll miss staying up until 3 a.m. in the corner office of the fourth floor of the Stud, delirious on tangerines and Hot Cheetos, trying to lay out this very paper with the Production department. The home I timidly joined during my own Orientation week way back when. The last place on campus I visited before leaving in March 2020, and again in May 2021. Yes, this is a love letter to *The Tech* and every staff member on it, because what else would it be?

Every year around graduation time, phrases like “Don’t cry because it ended, smile because it happened” make their rounds on the internet. But I feel like I’m smiling for all that has yet to happen and crying that I won’t be there to experience it.

What actually kills me about leaving is having to give up all the friends I would have met in the coming year. The best and brightest from around the world, all stuffed into a couple square miles in Cambridge and Boston. And I don’t just mean the incoming Class of 2025. I also mean the Class of 2024, who deserve a true introduction to campus. And the Classes of 2023 and 2022, who left campus as underclassmen and will be teaching the ropes next year without having truly learned them yet.

But I guess the world keeps spinning. So, as much as I wish I could personally tell the next generation of Production prospectives they missed a widow, I have faith in the MIT community I’m leaving behind. I can’t wait to see what you guys do.



GLORIA LIN—THE TECH

Thank you all for making MIT so hard to say goodbye to.